

# Loafer Laws Really Mean "Work or Fight"

## Police Dragnet for Idlers Already Out and Effect of War Legislation Soon Will Be Felt



UNITED STATES MARSHAL  
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BY INTERNATIONAL FILM SERVICE.

By JOHN WALKER HARRINGTON.

THERE is to be no more any such thing as profitable loafing. Those who would invite their souls will have either to work or to fight. Even poets are in danger of the workhouse. The philosophers of the benches in Madison Square may no longer blink at the white campanile and listen to Big Tom strike the quarter hours of sweet idleness.

Both the nation and the State are at the dragnet. The quest of the Commonwealth of New York for those born tired began yesterday, and Uncle Sam will begin some of his most effective seining on July 1, as one may see by reading the manifesto of the Provost Marshal-General. Many a poor fish will find himself struggling in the meshes of unwilling usefulness.

The proclamation of Gov. Whitman, which puts into effect the Robinson law, is on the lines of similar executive orders in New Jersey and Maryland. Its provisions are being carried out in this city by the Police Department under the direction of Chief Inspector Daly.

The new law sets forth that all male citizens from 18 to 50 must be regularly employed in an occupation which is "lawful, useful and recognized." The toiler must devote himself to said occupation for at least thirty-six hours a week. Those three words, "lawful," "useful" and "recognized," may send all kinds of persons away in the morning with their dinner pails because they cannot make good on all three in their old occupations.

### Some Characters Missing.

It just happens that some well known characters who might be affected by the law are no longer with us. There was an old man in Syracuse who used to lie for hours in a bathtub on the pretext that he was trying to discover something useful; but these days he certainly would have to show cause as to why he was not up and doing. Neither would Mr. Archimedes' lack of array, when he proclaimed his scientific discovery, have been condoned. He would have been indicted on two counts.

If the sage of Concord were living today he might have to show that philosophy was a recognized industry. Samuel Johnson might have to demonstrate that his building of a dictionary was an essential calling. There will be so many delicate points brought up that the Attorney-General is preparing an interpretation of the law.

While this is in the works, however, the police are busy themselves bobbing for lounge lizards. None of these slippery wrigglers will be able to escape from their well sanded hands. Whether they are found in the pink glow of the dancers or in the full glare of the Great White Way, lounge lizards are in peril of the creel. There is a general scuttling of dancing saurians.

It was not long ago that the owner of a Broadway trottery served notice on all professional fox trotters and one steppers of the masculine gender that he

was through with them and the best thing they could do was to enlist. Most of them did. Right here it should be said in all justice to the tango trainers that many of them have gone to the trenches.

The service flag of the largest temple of Terpsichore in the city has many stars. It is flung each day to the breeze, weather permitting. The young lady instructors between tunes knit mufflers and socks for the absent ones. Many grandfathers were caught by the dancing craze, and there is no reason why some of them should not turn teachers and introduce the lumbago lilt and sciatia slide.

Gilded youths are revealing unsuspected steel in their composition. Men of maturer age, who probably never before did anything like work, are confronted with the problem of showing that they are engaged in honest toil. The other day a man of wealth found himself confronted by a quandary. He had retired from business with an ample fortune and had volunteered to assist one of the local draft boards.

His physician advised him that his health was failing and that he should lose no time in taking a two months vacation. Then came the news that the State had enacted legislation which seemed to require him to work. He therefore applied to the chairman of the draft board for permission to go away for a while. His application is being held up pending the arrival of the Attorney-General's opinion.

### General Scramble for Work.

It looks very much now as though there would be a general scramble for offices and desk room by citizens of great wealth. In order to do their six hours a day of gruelling labor they will have to have files and other adjuncts of business. They will have to rise betimes and hurry down town in their automobiles, which by the way, they may have to drive themselves.

Brokers of all kinds are likely to increase, for it has long been a practise of seions of well-to-do families to subside on commissions from insurance policies on property of their relatives or wards. If they do not do this they can probably find employment at Quartermaster's depots or in doing clerical work on part time for the Government.

The example made the other day of a citizen of Baltimore, who, despite his ample fortune was haled before the court as an idler, shows what may be expected in this metropolis. As the sheriffs of all counties in this State are responsible for the enforcement of the law, gentlemen on their country estates engaged in outdoor sports or indoor amusements may have explanations to make.

It is expressly stated that persons with property and income are not exempted from the provisions of the law.

The police of this city have sweeping authority under the Robinson law. They are instructed to proceed against those who "loiter in idleness in streets, squares, depots, poolrooms, hotels and saloons." At first they will give kindly warnings to those who have not as yet registered themselves with the State labor bureaus and Federal employment agencies.

### Must Show They Have Tried.

All persons not working must demonstrate that they have repeatedly tried to land jobs. It will not be accepted as an excuse that they have refused opportunities to labor because the pay offered was not large enough, in their opinion. Their refusal to accept does not count if it can be shown that the wages they might have had were as large as those commonly given. Men who are out of employment temporarily because of strikes in their callings are exempt, as are also apprentices and students.

There has always been a large class in the community with a constitutional aversion to labor. Inspector Daly expects to deal with these sternly, yet reasonably.

"There are many of these feckless ne'er-do-wells," said he, "whose failure to keep at regular work is due to lack of stamina. They get small sums from their families or occasionally do odd jobs. This new law will help them find their place in the world.

"Some of them may be lacking in mental force and they will be the better

for a little urging. The police have been instructed to deal very quickly with those who are merely hanging about the city without any intention of being useful."

Martin Conboy, director of the draft, with United States Marshal McCarthy at his right hand, will have much to do when on July 1 there goes into effect the new rule just promulgated by the Provost Marshal-General. This order is directed against all men of draft age who are not engaged in occupations which the Government regards as essential. It is so sweeping in its provisions that it piles more and more trouble upon the heads of those who are already sorely disturbed by the State statutes.

### Authorities in Full Accord.

There is no doubt that the Federal and the State authorities will work in unison against the chronic loafer and the pool room lounge. There will be a steady interchange of captives. As any person who is strong enough to walk to a park bench and sit up all day may be considered as well enough to work at something, the law will make short shrift of these frequenters of our open air places of recreation.

But what of the chauffeur? The law prescribes that men of draft age engaged in domestic service must either work or fight. The chauffeur who drives a limousine for a private owner might be classified as a coachman or a footman or as any of those functionaries whom this law would force into actual service. There is a great demand for chauffeurs in the army, for there are motor trucks and ambulances and tanks to be driven on the other side.

There is no doubt that the chauffeur who is driving a commercial truck carrying food or munitions is doing part of the work of the war, no matter where he is. But what is the status of a chauffeur in the employ of a family who spends much of his time waiting for Mr. Knickerbocker or Mrs. Knickerbocker to notify him to bring around the car? Some chauffeurs of this class have anticipated things by getting other employment for part of the day.

Many automobile owners have followed the example of Herbert Hoover, the Food Administrator, by dispensing with their private chauffeurs and driving their own cars. The snappily attired young women volunteers of our motor corps prove that drivers for automobiles need not be lacking.

### Elevator Operators Also.

The law also applies to registrants who may be operating passenger elevators. Many young men in this occupation have already been released for war by the employment of young women. It is no unusual thing to see feminine elevator runners and starters in the downtown skyscrapers. Many others are already working in the large apartment houses of the upper city.

Section B of the new order directs also that attendants of draft age shall be diverted from clubs, hotels, stores, office buildings and bath houses.

The announcement that eligibles shall be withdrawn from serving food and drink in public places, including hotels and social clubs, came like a bombshell in waiter circles. Many thousands of the knights of the napkin are doing valiant work at the front, but there still remain many of them in public dining rooms and cafes in this city.

There is a liberal proportion of elderly men among them now, and there are many persons of the Group C class whose minor physical defects made them better adapted for the dining room than the dugout. In some of the table d'hote restaurants of New York girls and women serve food because Alphonse and Jean are now bearded poilus. It is likely also that many colored waiters will be brought from the South, especially men about draft age.

Valets may be considered as essential in making great men presentable, but there are comparatively few of them now in personal service. Some of them are with their masters at the front.

The recent proclamation sends into the field or the workshop ushers and other attendants engaged in connection with games, sports and amusements, excepting actual performers in legitimate concerts,



MARTIN CONBOY  
HEAD OF NEW YORK CITY'S  
ARMY DRAFT.

operas or theatrical performances. Male ushers at theatres are now few, because for the last ten years women have been gradually taking their places.

The amusement world is in a ferment over the clause relating to games and sports. The Secretary of War has been asked to decide whether or not this regulation applies to baseball players. It may be that the twirlers of the horseshoe sphere will be hurling hand grenades at the Boche before long, or that in order to qualify for the diamond they may have to drive a truck for a part of the day.

### Actor Folk Much Concerned.

The actor folk are deeply concerned over the imminence of the dragnet. In the good old summertime they frequent Broadway seeking engagements, and although they seem to lead casual lives they are ever busy learning the news of the Rialto. The theatrical season lasts ostensibly forty weeks out of the year, but for many a follower of the stage it is only twenty. Even if the actor folks are exempted while they are playing they may be subject to the call of work or fight when "at liberty."

The Provost Marshal General makes it very evident that the regulations apply to all persons of the underworld, such as gamblers, attendants and employees at bucket shops and racetracks, fortune tellers, clairvoyants, palmists and the like.

As far as the order affects the serious industries there is still much speculation. The representatives of the Government here have not as yet received official copies of the document. When the clause which prescribes that registrants who are employed as sales clerks or are engaged in various forms of clerical service in stores and mercantile establishments comes up for enforcement there will undoubtedly be a wide latitude given.

The large department stores of New York have already furnished enormous quotas for the army. Even before the declaration of war they had organized brigades on their own account and had paid the expenses of military instruction. More men are being released from the counter and the stockroom every day, and their places are taken by elderly men or by women. The labor market is such, however, that it is growing difficult to find enough women and girls to replace the male eligibles who are constantly being removed from the callings of peace.

Such is the American spirit, however, that both the rich and the poor who were wont to dally by the waysides of life, once they have scented the fray, will rejoice in the benison of "something accomplished, something done."

### Substitute for Gold

IT is said that a serviceable substitute for gold is obtained by combining ninety-four parts of copper with six parts of antimony and adding a little magnesium carbonate to increase the weight. It is said that this alloy can be drawn, wrought and soldered very much like gold, and that it also receives and retains a golden polish. It is worth something like 25 cents a pound.